

Shadows from the Abyss



Frida Menkan Mbunda

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Preface

As human beings, we react to situations differently because of how equally different we are, moulded thus by our environment, our cultural values, and our individual upbringing. Accordingly, whereas some people withdraw in the face of challenges, others break down and cry, or simply run away, yet others fight back in one way or the other. Mbunda, certainly, is one who does not withdraw, nor does she run away from the problems tormenting her world. As obvious from this volume of poems *Shadows From The Abyss*, Mbunda is a fighter who confronts issues challenging her, and there are many.

This is a volume that is thematically and stylistically rich, inspired by that conviction brewed by a troubled id as it questions the world around it. True, this is Mbunda's first volume, but in it she grapples with problems that she is certainly not encountering for the first time. It is obvious she has pondered about these issues, attempted resolving at least some of them, only to be frustrated by the reigning bedlam against which she is so determined to stand her ground. As a last resort, she channels her emotions and vents the resulting anger, while still clinging to hope, in rich and equally potent poetic lines. In the poems in this volume, Mbunda is crying out for help because of the disarray surrounding her. Her society is tormented by betrayal, exploitation, the collapse of cultural values as her people now abandon their rich ways in exchange for debauched foreign standards coming their way in the guise of the vogue for the hour. In the same vein, their wealth is being carted away by manipulating foreigners who insult and ridicule them in the process. Mbunda is equally bitter about the failed political experiment her country is, a nation which fights against itself as—for example—a natural deep sea port is neglected in preference for an artificial port simply because the natural port belongs to the wrong side of the nation. The frustration is such that Mbunda does not hesitate to mock Weka's break from Nigeria only to have "French clothes" forced on her part of the country which she fears will, like a volcano, erupt any time soon.

The panorama of Mbunda's poetic involvement is as broad as it is diverse: she lambasts, praises, laments, mourns, and dares to hope even, the odds notwithstanding, for she calls on God as she believes He is the ultimate solution to the catastrophic problems tormenting her beloved nation (and continent) to which she vows to cling at all costs. Mbunda's overpowering emotions which frequently overwhelm the reader, declare her a true and determined poet even if she is only just beginning to make this quality of hers felt. These then, are potent poems with authentic concerns frequently and effectively communicated. At the very least, this is a volume that qualifies Mbunda as a promising poet. It is a volume that cries out loud, given its rich poetic qualities, that more can be expected of Mbunda as time goes by.

It is common knowledge that first steps, more often than not, are wobbly, yet if Mbunda's first poetic strides are in any way shaky, the shakiness is hardly glaring because of her appealing themes and the overall freshness of her voice. This is a poet who is out to communicate than to mystify; a poet of the people, in other words, who hopes her messages about very pertinent issues affecting her world, in particular, and humankind at large, can get across to whomever attempts to read her work. Her burning desire is to reach Cameroonians, especially, so that they may become aware of who indeed they are, what their history has been, what their turbulent present is, and what their future is likely to be if something is not done, and in a timely manner. Hence the frighteningly prophetic lines of "Helpless" which easily come across as a disguised call:

For when it becomes excruciating
History will be annihilated
1961 and 1972 shall be annulled
And Weka shall awake
Weka shall arise.

Beyond entertainment therefore, Mbunda's poems are messengers to society urging all to identify and address critical issues that will otherwise yield forth cataclysmic consequences. This is a poet with a mission which, it would appear, has only just begun.

Emmanuel Fru Doh
Minnesota, 2009.

Foreword

This slender volume of poems is Dr. Frida Menkan Mbunda's first published collection. The poems touch on a variety of issues, some personal and private, other public-past and current. They range from family, love and longing; friendship and marriage, to culture, politics, corruption and death. They are cadenced and vibrant with different emotion: nostalgia, regret and outrage; loss, pain and pathos tinged with a touch of wistfulness and irony. But throughout in style and themes, they reveal a keen observer of human behavior, a budding poet struggling to find her stride; to mine the shallows and the depths of human experience, to give a unique expressive voice to the human condition. This struggle is not easy. It is and has always been at the heart of the poet's agony and ecstasy. Still, perhaps in time, the voice will break forth and through and we shall discover a young of surprising range, depth and intensity. At least we hope so.

But for now, this collection suggests that Dr. Frida Menkan Mbunda is, so to speak testing the waters and will, with experience and the maturity of years, fulfill the promise of her full potential.

I am pleased to be able to commend this beginning effort to the reader and to express the hope that the wellspring of these poems will continue to flow, fuller and freer and that Dr. Mbunda will continue to plumb its depth to the full with growing sensitivity and insight.

Professor Lovett Elango
Department of History
University of Buea

In Bewilderment

In a hullabaloo,
Days of anguish,
Nights of tumult and hope
Integrity?
The future?
The difficulties of beginning.
I have sought inward,
outward, about and roundabout,
Left and right for
the faith to begin.
Discernment for the future,
Where is Mr. Tortoise to
Unravel this mystery?
Fourteen harvests ago I held unto hope
Integrity and
The future.
For fourteen harvests I had peace,
Not the peace of the Lord.
For fourteen harvests I had hope, hope in man.
For fourteen harvests
I depended on an empty promise.
For fourteen harvests I waited.
How do I begin all over?
How do I deal with hope, Integrity and
The future?

They are Corrupt

The heads, they are corrupt.
The hands, they are corrupt.
The priests, they are corrupt.
The believers, they are corrupt.
The soil is corrupt.
The water is corrupt.
The air is corrupt.

In Bewilderment

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Days of anguish,
Nights of tumult and hope
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They are Corrupt

The heads, they are corrupt.
The hands, they are corrupt.
The priests, they are corrupt.
The believers, they are corrupt.
The soil is corrupt.
The water is corrupt.
The air is corrupt.

Corrupt?
How?
Just corrupt.
Corrupt?
Why?
Well, just corrupt.
Immoral,
Conceived in corruption,
Born in corruption into
A corrupt and immoral world,
Breathed corrupt air, ate corrupt food,
Drank corrupt water,
So must be corrupt.

The Justice of the Unjust

The culprit away gallantly walks;
The innocent to Golgotha jeered
The justice of the unjust;
Bizarre
Inequitable

The Wedding Feast

She smiles in his arms.
The crowd murmurs.
Some grumble,
Some curse,
Some pretend to bless,
Some grimace,
Some bless.

Why?

They say she had easy virtue.
They say she has no integrity.

Corrupt?
How?
Just corrupt.
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Why?
Well, just corrupt.
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Conceived in corruption,
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Why?

They say she had easy virtue.
They say she has no integrity.

They say she is a chameleon.
They say she is a lioness.
They say she is...

“Why these utterances?”

Some are jealous.
Some are malicious hypocrites.
Some are witches
Some are...

What does she do?

She smiles on.
She dotes on her husband
She caresses her husband
She loves her husband
She is blind and deaf
Why her indifference?

Cause she knows the truth
Cause she knows her husband
Cause she knows the crowd
Cause she knows God.

Her husband, what does he do?

He smiles,
He cuddles her.
He knows he has a pearl
He knows his wife
He knows God.

The crowd, what does it do?

You know malicious hypocrite,
Witches...

WHAT DO THEY DO?

They envied the couple.
Some went home to quarrel

Quarrel? Why?

They say they are not loved.
They say their spouses do not know them.
They now know the truth.

The truth? What truth?

What He said.
The two-shall leave the malicious crowd and hypocrites
And be glued together, always together,
Blind and deaf to gossips.

Praying Amiss

You pray amiss for
The girl at the airport,
How can she know her beauty,
When her mother bleached her at birth
Stretched her hair
Taught her smiles as
Cloaks to deceit?
What beauty will she know?

The bird in the forest,
How can it be left alone
When men here believe
The world was created for them
When its habitat is chopped down with impunity
When even the unborn taste for its flesh
When it must be silent to live?
What habitat will it have?

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What habitat will it have?

The radio and television,
How can they be filled with the truth
When the newscaster is Lucifer's trainee
When the news is cast at gunpoint
When the people abhor the truth?

You cannot weep
Cause you are just passing.
Stop and glance,
Then you will wail and mourn:
Mourn for a giant on its knees,
Mourn for a great nation in inferno,
Mourn for the grimacing girl at the airport,
Mourn for the newscaster,
Mourn for the silent bird on scurry.
Mourn for a people shrouded with corruption;
Then you will pray right and
Ask God to:
Grant the girl at the airport
Honesty, true beauty and
Freedom for the newscaster,
To create a habitant for the scurrying bird and
Grace for the people to know
The truth will set them free.

Nature

Nature,
Emanating from beyond,
Unique.
Astonishing the brave,
A mystery.
Artist in vain depict you
Researchers investigate you.
Yet achieve little.
But to the prophet
You are a link to Him,
The source.

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Vogue

They call you civilization.
They call you globalization, technology and development.
They display you in nudity and homosexuality.
They justify you with models from the west.
Nevertheless,
I call you Satanism,
Stupidity, ignorance.
You are the anti Christ,
The way of destruction.

Dethroning

The smooth black coloration is
A glorious and exquisite crown
Placed on the blacks by God.
It is our identity and scepter of authority.
But like hawks hunger for water,
Our damsels hanker for the white pigment,
Obliterate their identity and annoy Him.
Ignore or seem ignorant that
They are dethroning themselves.
For in the dark skin lies
The ideal of kingship,
Purity and
Strength.

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Orature

Feed them,
Let them suckle and be revived,
For the western wind is blowing;
Blowing anew,
Blowing dirt and dust.
Suffocating.
Masquerading as
Globalization.

The Family Calabash

It holds waters.
Waters of unanimity and veracity,
Waters of love and impartiality,
Waters of acumen and exculpation,
Gathered from the wells of time.
Our ancestors drank of its content
And when they opened their mouths,
Bright lessons issued forth.
In friendship, harmony and uprightness issued forth.
Astuteness moderation and affection were their watchwords.
But now we have on the directives of strangers
unschooled in our ways,
Untutored in our proverbs polluted the content of the
family calabash
When we drink of it, stupidity,
Selfishness and injustice issues forth.
Immorality, corruption and exploitation are
Our watchwords.

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African Democracy

The radio cries daily
Employing Africans to borrow from
The west,
Western democracy,
Dictatorship of the majority.
When I hear this weeping,
Sleep finishes in my eyes.
Western democracy,
Ebbled by Africans,
Westernization African democracy.
Destroying communalism,
African democracy,
The true democracy.

Communalism,
The rule of all.
YES! It is the rule of all.
The minority always considered,
Always consulted, always listened to.
Majority or minority
None prevails.
The fon is not paramount,
The Nkwinfon¹ is not paramount,
The people are not paramount,
The rule of all.

George Bush in Iraq,
Western democracy,
Dictatorship of the minority.
Let's return to Communalism,
African democracy.
It might seem obscure
Nevertheless, it is perfect.

1. The whiteman's abode

The saviors

They promised us everything
But took away all we had.
They took away our riches,
Our pride and our confidence.
They promised us independence but
Plundered our land and filched our terracotta.
They promised us opulence but left us shoddier.
They took away our peace, our unity,
Our love. They left us
Most horrible than we were;
Slaves in our motherland and
Second class citizens.
Now we are rising, our
Brothers are organizing us for a
Second saving.

Unchangeable Africa

After years of plundering
You stood still,
A rock.

They drain and squeeze you dry,
But you are still the ocean that
Waters the world.
You will never dry up.

They dug up your terracotta,
Shawl your artifacts,
Obliterate your beauty,
Defile your deities and venerated shrines,
But you remain unshaken.

They cut down your forest and timber
For western technology,

The saviors

They promised us everything
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But you remain unshaken.

They cut down your forest and timber
For western technology,

But your rainfall which waters the world
And causes production remains.

Nowadays new crusades of
Globalization are hailed,
Aimed at uprooting you
To leave your roots in midair;
To annihilate you,
But I know
You will remain,
Unchangeable,
Unshakeable
AFRICA

Working His Purpose

I will dwell in you Africa,
Even in your underdevelopment
I will dwell in you even with your wars,
Famine and Struggles.
I will remain in you
Even in your bleakness.
He kept me here for a purpose and
He is working it out.
I could run to my kismet
Thy unpolluted air nourishes my lungs.
Thy bright sun tones and fertilizes my ebony crust.
Thy cool breezes soothes my hurts.
Thy night sky of brilliant twinkling stars,
Grandeurs to behold, assure me of His presence.
Thy colourful birds wake me at dawn with melodious
anthems.
The virgin soil, thou visits and blesses.
The sight of your green hills,
The whispering of birds at dawn and twilight,
Are sights never to depart from.
The woes in you are my stepping-stones
He is working His purpose out.

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Globalization are hailed,
Aimed at uprooting you
To leave your roots in midair;
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I will dwell in you Africa,
Even in your underdevelopment
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The woes in you are my stepping-stones
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You are the crown of creation.
Created on the sixth day,
All errors corrected
Crowned with a splendorous climate,
No snow
No earthquakes
No whirlwinds
No cyclones
No flood
No drought.
Though you are at each other's throat,
I will dwell in you.
He is working His purpose.
Someday there will be serenity,
When we will know You alright

My mother

She rushes out before dawn.
Back only at twilight,
Always in a hurry.
Day by day
To and from the field,
Climbing giant hills
In rain or sun she toils,
Planting weeding and harvesting
To feed the chauvinists
That despised her.
Her face drenched in sweat
Glitters in the sun as
She smiles and labours on,
A Rose to all.
She responses to every greeting
Even stops to gossip.
To the cheerless
A smile she offers,
The hungry, a mussel.

You are the crown of creation.
Created on the sixth day,
All errors corrected
Crowned with a splendorous climate,
No snow
No earthquakes
No whirlwinds
No cyclones
No flood
No drought.
Though you are at each other's throat,
I will dwell in you.
He is working His purpose.
Someday there will be serenity,
When we will know You alright

My mother

She rushes out before dawn.
Back only at twilight,
Always in a hurry.
Day by day
To and from the field,
Climbing giant hills
In rain or sun she toils,
Planting weeding and harvesting
To feed the chauvinists
That despised her.
Her face drenched in sweat
Glitters in the sun as
She smiles and labours on,
A Rose to all.
She responses to every greeting
Even stops to gossip.
To the cheerless
A smile she offers,
The hungry, a mussel.

When she appears,
Wrapper on her waist,
Basket on her back,
She is always a beauty to behold.

My first classroom

The place of my birth
With teachers,
Men of integrity, endowed with
The wisdom of years past.
Schooled and skilled but with
No certificates, no diplomas
No curriculum but
Nature's vast material and norms.
No blackboards, notebooks and
No dusters, only
The people of the clan
Who taught by examples.
The skilled griots, that taught and correct with music.
My first classroom.

Morning in my village

Always a splendorous sight
Greeted by cocks crowing,
Birds chirping,
The bright eastward sun knocking on windows,
Glittering green hills cheer a new day.
No snow, no fog, no gunshots, cool and quiet.
No noisy cars, no industrial machines,
No fear of going out,
For there are no terrorist threats;
Only the flowers, the birds,
The green hills, the bright morning sun
And these *do not threaten*

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But whisper God's love
Into our ears.
Folks rush out to hail the day
And intermingle with nature
As it was in the beginning.
No thought of or apprehension of death
As there are no terrorists
No threats from man or from nature

My friend

Very much like me,
Lover of light,
Often with me.
She goes in and out with me.
Sometimes she brings a friend.
Always tries to help
But never assists.
She jumps before me
Into and out of bed.
She does not grow like normal children
Who make it slow
She sometimes shoots up taller like a giraffe.
Sometimes too short, almost invisible
In darkness she abandons me
Myfriend
My shadow

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The stranger

I had wanted to keep it intact,
Nene did so.
Why these mayhem?
Where is Mnkong Moteh?
Gone are the days
When cries of joy were heard in bridal nights,
When mothers danced and embraced at dawn
As in-laws showered them with gifts.
Gone are the days when unions were worth,
When woken divinities truss couples.
How I miss the good old days
I had wanted to keep the path intact but the tortoise,
He talked of meat, kiban and jewelry and
I let him in.
Now I lament,
The loss of my culture and
The loss of my pride.
My mother did not dance;
My mother was not embraced at dawn.
I had no cry of joy
Just because a stranger came.

The lone way

I prayed
I cried
I longed for an alternative;
It seemed the lone way
But was it the lone way?
He looked at me and
I saw the devil in him.
My tears flew in vain
I cursed my tongue
But my frog brother was in my shoe.
We had a right to the papers

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We needed them desperately
They like a Rose in winter,
The light to the path,
The way,
The wind to a sail.
Oaths, paper, or envelops,
One must prevail.
My frog brother touched the envelope
And got the papers.
Since I could not break an oath,
The oath of honesty,
The envelope prevented me.

Land of Pretence

There
Laughter is sadness
Smile hatred,
Sympathy mockery,
An embrace betrayal,
Icons of pretence abound.
Brothers hug and stab,
Mothers suckled and murder,
Hawkers grimace and cheat
Honuorables defile in
The land of pretence.

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Home Alone

How we mourn,
How we lament and long for home,
How we fantasize
About the warmth of home,
The neighbourliness,
The justice.
How we say home is better
When in foreign abodes.
Now, home alone,
Stone eyes neighbours grin,
Grey faces mock,
As we struggle to disperse
The darkness ahead,
As we endeavor to surmount
The injustices,
The fear of annihilation
In an imprudent merger.
Then we hanker again
For foreign abodes
Where we are not
Underdogs, not
Bastardized, not
Dehumanized, but
Our humanity and
Individuality is recognized
And we fear
No injustice,
No obliteration and
We are loved and
Sympathized with
As strangers.

From Bondage Slavery to Free Slavery

See Africans in chains, forced into the land of slavery,
Bound together in the evil chains of slavery.
Their tribal marks insignificant, no longer their identity.
Molumba lacerates their ears.
Oh! See how they squirm in pain.
Smith procures them and scythes their bodies and
Gives them a fresh identity.
See them cursing, praying and evoking God's vengeance
Upon their kinsmen who callously give them away and
Their white brothers who brutalize and abuse them.
See them on plantations, toiling and sweating,
Raising wheat, but given crumbs.
Hear mothers' shriek, as sucking babies are
Ripped from their breasts;
Families separated.
See teenage lasses raped, ripped open and
Sold to new farms or intimidated into
Loveless affairs with masters.
See Douglass, a product of rape,
Battered and mortified by
The masters' helpless wife and children.
See them struggling to escape bondage.
See how they shudder, fearing the hound dogs.
See how they hide in toilets to read, seeking the
Knowledge that will set them free.
See how they dream, Martin Luther king Junior and
Frances Harper.
See how they idealize home, Claude McKay and
Langston Hughes,
See how they fight to be sent back home or be
Recognized, Marcus Garvey, Ralph Ellison,
Malcom X and Amiri Baraka.
See them rejoicing!
Free at last.
See Obama
President
Truly Free

Ooh!
See how free Africans,
Forced into free slavery by ruthless and rapacious
rulers,
Plead to be allowed into the land of milk and honey,
To be taken into free slavery,
See how they plead, how they beseech
To be taken into free slavery.
See our youngster, beseeching
To be accepted into free slavery.
See Africa's intellectuals in the desert, struggling
To go into slavery.
See African's youths, beggars in Morocco.
See dazzling black men, thrown in to the sea by
Buccaneers scared to be apprehended.
See them wilfully slaving, doing what they abhor at
home:
Washing corpses, washing dishes, washing the old
And marrying great grandparents.
See picture of naked girls on the net,
Oh! How appalling
See them scammed into prostitution
See our youngster in shameless embrace with white
grandparents,
Oh! See Mbango, our professor of traditional religion,
Straining in a class of nursing to earn a degree.
See our intellectuals, taxi drivers, gas engineers and
guards.
See Africans in queues, waiting to be registered in to
the DV lottery,
Willing to be exploited, willing to be slaves again.
The DV lottery,
American slavery, American exploitation.
A thousand immigrants needed, ten thousand winners
letters dole out
See Pa Nanng rejoicing, 'American here I come'
See him at the US embassy, a million medical
examinations
See him weeping; his life's saving depleted in vain,

Win letter disqualified, his dream deferred
Cause he is contaminated by malaria, our brother.
See the naked youngster over there,
Driven wacky by a win letter that did not materialize
He is handsomely ok.
Healthy, but just two 'A' levels and 'Es'
America abhors insignificant persons.
Pieces of land were sold in vain and
Family, friends and neighbours' savings wasted.
See Africans' patriots developing Africa,
Building skyscrapers, the Njifis and Etos and.....
See how America shrewdly incriminate and
incarcerated them
Desiring Africa remain poorer and America richer

Another dream Deferred

And what happens to a dream deferred?
To the vision of the sparrow that
Thought Biafra shrewd and perched on Louis?
It dreamed of the sun, of roses and of pearls
But saw thunderbolts, which scatter and guns that
maimed.
Promised equality
But its attires were forcefully stripped off,
Burned and half-naked French clothes forced on it.
Now it must choose Annihilation or Rebellion
For this dream differed, will like others
When the volcano cannot hold,
Blast.
It cannot dry up like
A Raisin in the sun

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Frenches

Frenches on drugs packets
Too difficult to comprehend,
I gulp down the drugs.
Frenches on Newspapers;
Frenches in the office, Frenches everywhere.
French exploitation,
Forcefully given thirty French tablets for ten, I paid.
French attempt to annihilate the Anglos.
I could not comprehend my French written name;
Given a new identity, am
Lost in the French world,
The world of supposed bilingualism,
Harmonized Bilingualism,
French bilingualism,
La Republic.

The Manifesto

To eradicate paucity,
To eradicate dishonesty,
The crows howl.
Now the ticket gotten
The melody has changed
So the boogie must stop.

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Someday

I will,
To the happiest place go.
The place of bliss,
The Place of exultation,
The place of no return.
Where the iniquitous cease from troubling
And the drained are at rest.
My abode a place for
Ovations,
Drumming,
Songs and dance will be.
They will gather;
Some with crocodile tears,
Others true lovers
To mourn.
Their death, their dead ones

The Sacrifice

Before their very eyes
They were overwhelmed
By visitors they did not invite,
By guests who came as associates,
With promises of infrastructure, edification
Salvation and democracy.
But before they could comprehend the music,
The nitty-gritty,
The monster released it
Seven heads of deadly poison
And stung both the youthful and the aged,
The sacred and the besmirched.
The rapacious beast ripped open what
Held them together.

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Now they move to the shrine
To know their destiny.
Hop together, bodies sparsely clad with cowry shells,
Somber hearts and souls beseeching.
Virgins with palm wine that
No mortals can drink,
They budge quietly
To lumetu, Mnkong Moteh's shrine,
To offer the sacrifice of appeasement,
Of entreaty.
But will they triumph?
Will the desecrated Mnkong Listen?
Will he be appeased?
Such is their hope.

Handwriting on the wall

Like Nebuchadnezzar
I ignored it.
Asked to quit school and
Toil to furnish surgical,
Sister's furnished.
Blind I was.
Envied, accused,
Maybe cursed.
Endless calls,
No response.
Playing goody goody,
Living in Pretence and
Ignoring the Handwriting on the world
I sought to please.
So she calls and worries about her bowels?
Iguana to my calls,
Yet I struggle and sought,
Sought to please,
Yet always a scapegoat
Seeking for the sun in dark clouds,

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Rain in a blue brilliant sky,
Love in hatred,
Peace in war and
Justice and trust from falsehood.

I have gone through rivers,
Rivers of Pains.
Alone, mourning alone,
No family.
Now reading the handwriting on the wall I grin.
I stand for the truth.
He loves me.
Every other Rose is poison.
Do I need love coated hatred?
Do I need mothers and fathers who cuddle and stab?
Do I need brothers and sisters who revile?
In-laws who presume and arbitrate?
Do I need to seek to gratify in vain?
I have known Rivers.
Descend alone,
Gone to Golgotha just with Him,
Christ who cares,
Forgives and exonerates.
He loves me unreservedly.
That is what matters.

The Unstoppable

Split the fatherland,
Create fresh counties to replace the provinces.
Roam in Ogbodo oyigbo¹ for centuries if you desire.
Apprehend and keep in custody
The loyalist, the imaginary turncoat and cons,
Arraign and incarcerated the griots,
Slaughter the soldiers,
Dehumanize your brother, the enemy in the house,
Bring into administration every of your folks
Milked the cow to dead and bleed dry the oil wells,
Exploit all the gadget of electioneering,
Even so,
You cannot impede change,
You cannot thwart aging,
You cannot put off
Passing away
The aged must pass on,
The young shall grow.

You Cannot Know

You may think it is paradise here,
So did I, three harvests ago.
Thoughts which embraced
Suckled and gave me hope.
Hope. Hope.
Hope, which I nurtured like a love plant.
I see stones her,
Sun beating,
No water,
No flowers.
You sure aspire
But where to?
Death is the best

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Created in God's Name

I too,
Invisible me, I sing God.
At the pinnacle of the firmament
I claim dominion.
I stand casting and binding.
Oh yes, I too cast and bind
With fetters on my own limbs.
I too
Shout and cry for the sun,
I curse the rain;
But sun and rain are the sides of a coin.
Oh how better to play the lizard
Nodding to both the sun and the rain,
Swimming with the calm waves and
The wild waves.
Acquiescent to the infinite God, instead of,
Talking of Him,
Knowing too little,
But claiming too much.

In the Name of the Father

I smiled when he said, eyes up
'In the name of the father'.
I smiled with excitement,
With hope and anxiousness,
I smirked with a desire
To reach the kite's height.
Then he said, Eyes down,
And of the son,
Eyes on my breast
On my waist,
On my shirt,
On my....

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Then I awoke from my dream;
But he said in the name of the father
So I had to smile.
With eyes now on the ground
I thought I didn't hear right
'And of the holy skirt'
Dawn threw up its light.
Too late to mend the damage,
Too late to join the choir,
Cognizance held up the keys;
But it was in the name of the father
So I grimace.

Tongue

Paradoxical you are,
Two edged sword.
You blessed and cursed,
You edify and defy,
You honor and abuse.
Paradoxical

African, the Unknown Land

How little they know you,
How shallow they think of you,
How absurd they have taken you?
They do not acknowledge your uniqueness.
They judge you on their terms,
But you are precious.
He created you on the sixth day,
All errors corrected.
You He endowed with
Beauty and riches none has:
A black skin that protects,
A bright sun that fertilizes the earth,

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Heat that energizes.
No snow, no cyclones,
No earthquakes but
Green hills, which blossom with pride.
With rivers,
Fountains of hope.
With music that makes cripples
Hunger for a dance.
The white devil has built his tabernacle here,
Hopping to defile you Africa,
Apple of God's eyes.
But he will never.
Cling to what you have Africa,
For envy makes them
Belittled you.
If you let go,
They will snatch your God given virtues
As they did in South Africa.

The Ritual Drink

The wine of efficacy,
The wine, which must be
Given and taken
For signatures to be signed,
Files to move,
Degrees signed,
For employment to be offered,
For nature to take its course
And for the abnormal to happen.
The ritual wine of corruption
White hoards results for a decade till
The ritual wine is
Given and taken.
Eze hides application for nine harvests,
Awaiting the ritual wine, the wine of corruption
Which must be given

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Eze hides application for nine harvests,
Awaiting the ritual wine, the wine of corruption
Which must be given

In cash or kind.
In Nigeria,
Nothing works,
Nothing moves,
Without the ritual wine
The wine of efficacy.
The ritual wine of corruption.

Life

A mirror
A crossroad
A burning candle
A shadow
A stage
A struggle
Roses, crosses
Vanity.

Pen

Small but great.
Giver of wisdom to all.
Expresser of feelings and emotions,
Exposer of the known and unknown,
Hailed by the shrewd and the honest.

Moonlit Night

Night of Bliss,
Brilliant moon, radiant stars.
Owls hoot, crickets chip,
The resting sun snoods.
Out in the open
We sat and chatted.

In cash or kind.
In Nigeria,
Nothing works,
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Moonlit Night

Night of Bliss,
Brilliant moon, radiant stars.
Owls hoot, crickets chip,
The resting sun snoozes.
Out in the open
We sat and chatted.

We sang and danced.
Elders told, youths listened
Nature listened too, to
Tales of the past,
The innocent past.
Tales about the prudent Tortoise.
Tales about the gorgeous but obstinate Mboghoo,
Tales about Tata and Suohtaine, the patriots.
We went on and on, late into the night.
No desire to retire
No robbers
No hired assassins.
The Ancestors and the gods
With us to share the night,
The night of bliss,
A serene night.

Helpless

Like dry grass in an encounter with fire
They stand helpless and hopeless
On their march to destruction.
Battered by strokes from their brothers
In chains to the land of anguish they go.
The Land of obliteration.
A haunting experience,
But He planned it.
For twinge leads to resolution,
For when it becomes excruciating
History will be annihilated
1961 and 1972 shall be annulled
And Weka shall awake.
Weka shall arise.

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Mummy

I knew mum. I had thought I knew mum.
I had thought mum loved me.
For she bought cloths for me.
Seasons have elapsed.
I do not know what to think.
Mum is an ardent Christian;
She goes to church always.
Always bitter.
Feels she sowed in vain but He says,
There are blessings for sowing
Blessings for watering
Blessings for Reaping.
Mum never forgets
A giant record of wrongs mum keeps.
Mum made me no promises if I succeeded,
Mum sewed no graduation dress for me,
Mum gave me no money on my birthday,
But mum gave me her best:
Hard work, humility
Independence and integrity
Mum passed me through fire and
Made me a vessel ready for use.
God bless Mum,
God vindicate me,
God keep mum, my sister and me.

The Obasinjom Warrior

You destiny,
Cruel,
Destroyer of visions and dreams.
You make the Eagle on Iroko
A faggot.
He made his clone,
His heir, his biographer,
Ambe, Hils, a facsimile him.
But you, cruel destiny
Took the tortoise off the cuff,
Crushing Him and his clone
Disgracing all.

Now,
Some wail,
Some philosophized and
Some in jolly toast.
But our consolation is
As you rightly believed,
NOT EVEN DEATH
CAN STOP YOU,
CAN DESTROY YOUR DREAM,
CAN DESTROY YOUR VISION.
YOUR BIOGRAPHY WILL BE WRITTEN,
MILLIONS WILL STALK YOU
AND THERE SHALL BE
A MILLION VOICES FOR THE VOICLESS.

For Mirthful Hilarious Ambe

No more will I smile with gusto,
Each time I hear you shout
'Where is this woman?'
Meters away from my house.
I will no longer grin,
When I hear you shout 'Dr, Mbunda.'
As you enter the faculty building.
My family and neighbours
Will no longer run to the sitting room
To be entertained by your hilarious presence.
I will have no one to call me his girlfriend,
No one I will tinkle and joke liberally with,
No one who will shout,
'Get me a beer, no! Get two bottles'.
My girls who have been mimicking you
Since we got news of your demise will have
No one to hilariously dramatize their follies.
They do not accept that you are gone.
O boy, who often sits quietly
Pretending to be indifferent is
Missing you most.
Ambe, we are asking questions we
Have no answers to.
All we know is that,
God is working his purpose out
As years proceed to years
And we can do nothing,
Nothing.
Adieu Hilarious!

Unity?

Soa soaring high,
Mbengwi dilapidating
Unity?
The terracotta carried away
Musigan
Hopes for reward
When oil wells are drained.
Natural ports abandoned,
Artificial ports dug.
Unity?

Black

Natural
Stainless
Strong as brass.
Pride of the lord
Strength of the world
Cradle of civilization
Sustainer of gods
Purity.

Dance of Restoration

Suddenly the drum stopped.
The dancers cut in mid air
Began to fidget,
Began to cuddle the naked silence
Pinching themselves.
Who will start the drum,
The dancers or the drummer?
The dancers ought to
The dancers must for

Unity?

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The dancers must for

In this dance of restoration the drummer is
not paramount
The dance can't stopped.
For in this is the dance of restoration.

Enemy-friends

They welcome you from abroad,
Play the drum of love,
Danced with you,
Feed you with
Poison.

Nchindah²

You came last but left in a hurry
A mustard plant uprooted.
He planted you by the riverside and said
You will fulfill your purpose and His promises are sure.
He said you would provide shelter for the Great and
small and
Proclaim his goodness in the land of the living and
His promises are sure.
He fashioned you for a purpose which you fulfilled.
You, the family's Rose,
The dazzling Rose that made all smile,
Even in winter.
The family's sacrificial lamb,
Harmless and selfless.
You came last, but left in a hurry,
Cheating us of our death right.
Named Nchindah but you refused to chiinda³

2. A name given to a child desiring that the child lives his whole lifespan

3. To live

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The beauty of closeness

Seasons ago, I looked at you in esteem
Desiring every eye contact believing you a Pearl,
A gallant knight,, a gem, a dove,
A cheerful and admirable angel,
An understanding and loving father and
A shrewd administrator.
But two hours of intimacy divulge your mask and I see
Worse than a wolf
A cheat
A sadist

Nonentities

The Ms, Ps and As, human
The Ps on embellished tables sit
Tangui, wine and snacks
Abundant.
The Ms also, in comfort sits
Hours of ranging
The As cut off by the lingua franca
Grimace in pain, in thirst and in hunger.
Hungry for a morsel
From the Ps' decorated tables
Thirsty for a drop of water from the wine stuff table
To cool their burning throats.
The Ms and Ps, nonentities

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The IMS

Cannibals,
Cheats,
Gluttons,
Wolves in sheep's clothing.
Gorgeously dressed, well shaven, neat,
Drowning in posh champagne in tainted bottles
Mead fox,
Feigning love,
Innocent serpents,
Deadly roses,
Elegant pigs.

Fellowshipises

My sister suffers from *fellowshipises*
The wondering disease
To
Redeem
Winners
Prevailing word
All Saints
Complete true church, True complete church
Church of Christ, Christ's church
Christ's true church,
She goes.
She strays,
Faltering,
Living her name
Monica, Uncertain
Turn against family
ISOLATED
Hoodwink by idolaters
Wolves in sheep's skin
Deluded by their sanctimoniousness
Their charming dances

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Deluded by their sanctimoniousness
Their charming dances

Sweet sister
Be on your sentinel as you banquet with those who
boast in His name
Devil's enchanters

My Day of passing

The inevitable day, ties love blessed, broken
Day of joy, for the saintly soul goes
Where the impious cease from troubling and
The weary are at rest.
Day of howling for the faithless and the pagans
My greatest wish on day of my passing is:
No tears to perturb the cosmos and make
My homeward voyage tumultuous,
No bawling,
Songs of exultation and songs of appreciation.
Others had minutes, some days,
Others just a year but I had scores.
He has worked his purpose, Mission complete.
No mortuary to denature my divine core so
Termites, worms and crickets will praise Him
For fresh natural and accessible food.
I want no sarcophagus so I will be embraced by mother
earth,
Naked as I came.
I want dancing, smiles and thanks.

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Your Anniversary

It is 6:30 am, 8 March, same day and time,
A harvest after that fateful day
When the call came with news we still find difficult to
believe.
You, fiercely forced on the journey that should be
serene.
The eastward sun still knocks on our window
Birds still whistle and crickets chip,
Today to them, just another day
But to us much has happened
Much that will not have if you were present
Things are so drab. We washed plates to be fed,
Intimidated at meetings but no one walked out, no one
dared.
Obscenities and absurdities occurred in daylight.
Those servants, they insult us, they mock us
At these times we miss you most.
No beer, no one ask for a drink.
Everyone seemed so busy
We do not have your courage to shout
We do not have your madness but
We know we need crazy BBs to bring sanity to
Our crazy society

This is the first volume of a patriotic poet whose heart is on fire. The poems touch on a variety of issues, some personal and private, other public – past and current. They range from family, love and longing; friendship and marriage, to culture, politics, corruption and death. They are cadenced and vibrant with different emotions: nostalgia, regret and outrage; loss, pain and pathos tinged with a touch of wistfulness and irony. In style and themes, they reveal a keen observer, a budding poet struggling to find her stride; to mine the shallows and the deeps of human experience, to give a unique expressive voice to the human condition. With a wide range of emotions, Mbunda touches on a variety of turbulent issues muddying the waters. But she is not without hope; she believes the volcano will only erupt if her call is unheeded.

“Beyond entertainment, Mbunda’s poems are messengers to society urging all to identify and address critical issues that will otherwise yield forth cataclysmic consequences. This is a poet with a mission which, it would appear, has only just begun.”

**- Emmanuel Fru Doh, Department of English, Century College
Minnesota, USA**

“I am please to be able to commend this beginning effort to the reader and to express the hope that the wellspring of these poems will continue to flow, fuller and freer and that Mbunda will continue to plumb its depth to the full with growing sensitivity and insight.”

- Lovett Elango, Professor of History, University of Buea, Cameroon

Frida Menkan Mbunda, born in Oku sub-division of the North West Region of Cameroon as the third of nine children, is married to Nekang Fabian Nfon. She studied at the University of Yaounde and also at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where she obtained her PhD. Dr Mbunda has taught at the Universities of Kogi State and Nsukka in Nigeria, and currently teaches at the University of Buea, Cameroon.



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